1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria



involve considerable physical exertion and have proved excellent material for the physical training of the boys in the State schools; at the Muria *gotul* dormitories these games often take the place of dancing and singing. But the only Hill Maria villages which have anything of the kind appear to be those of the Padalibhum and Tapalibhum *pargannas* which are gradually adopting the dormitory organization of their Muria neighbours; and some Bison-horn villages on the borders of the Jagdalpur Muria country are beginning to copy the Murias and Bhattras. Early to bed is the rule for old and young in Maria villages, and the child from the beginning learns to copy his father's activities; his playthings soon become small bows and arrows, fishing-rods and snares, skill in the use of which will make him an asset to the community. Stilt-walking in the early monsoon, occasional use of bull-roarers and bamboo drums, crude ornamentation of the walls of houses or the carving of ornamental combs and beadwork seem to be the only other recreations of Hill Maria youth.

### *F. Reckoning Time*

The Hill Maria names for the months have already been given (page 129), and it has been said that in general the Bison-horn Marias know and use the local Hindu names. They call a month *lenj*, the word used for the moon; but all, even Bison-horn Marias, have to think hard before they can tell you what month it is, and there may be a certain amount of argument on the point. Throughout Bastar there is something of this uncertainty; the local Hindu months are named after festivals such as Goncha, Dasehra and Diwali; and the Bastaria, even if he adopts these, does not like to observe them on the same date in every village, because that would deprive him of the chance of taking part in the celebrations at the surrounding villages.

Though the Bison-horn Maria knows the Hindu names for the days of the week, and uses them in his conversation, the Hill Maria does not. If word comes to a Hill Maria headman that in thirteen days' time he and his villagers have to go to the tahsil court, or to work on the annual road repairs, he will make a tally string with thirteen knots and undo one every day, leaving to keep the appointment on the morning of the last knot. These tally strings are also kept by those who attend markets at fairly regular intervals; and in a murder case, of which the villagers had decided to suppress or postpone informing the police because it was the harvest season, the wife of the murdered man, determined to get justice, had kept a tally string on which she tied a fresh knot every

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is a vague idea that monozygotic twins are more likely to be fortunate than dizygotic. Thus when Tati Buta's wife gave birth to female twins at Palnar, it was observed that they had but one placenta and the people declared them to be lucky and expected them to survive—which they did. But at Phulpar, where Sodi Mandra's wife gave birth to dizygotic twins, a boy and a girl, both died within a fortnight, and at Bara Harmamunda, where Oyami Kama's wife had male twins of the same order, both parents and the children died soon afterwards. 845

The Marias believe that the cause of such births may be physical, magical or supernatural. When Gangu of Koriras had male twins it was believed to have been due to her eating off a leaf-plate made of double leaves. It was the indiscretion of eating a double cob of maize that gave Oyami Kama's wife her twins. The Marias, therefore, are generally careful not to pick double leaves or fruit—double plantains, ebony fruit, maize and so on. Even a husband should be careful about this. For even though twins are not specially unlucky nobody wants them, and it is hard for the mother to nourish two children properly. If a young girl has twins, it is generally assumed that she has been lying with more than one man. At Gogonda a woman had intercourse both with her husband and a lover on the day of her post-menstrual bath. The result was twins and such grievous offence to the Departed that they killed both children within a few weeks.

The Marias also believe that twins may be the result of intercourse with a supernatural being. At Gudra I was told how Hunga Nupo's wife was visited by a Rau: 'He laughed and went to her. The next day her husband lay with her and in due time she gave birth to twins.' A similar story is told of the wife of Sodi Mandra.

Maria twins, like twins all over India, are named after the inseparable couple Rama and Lakshman. Two boys are Rama and Lakha, two girls Rame and Lakhe. The after-birth, whether double or single, of both children is buried in one pit and only one arrow is put above it. In the same way the twins are supposed to remain very close to each other throughout their lives. 845 553

## VI

Grigson was unable to find any trace of the dormitory among the Bison-horn Marias; the people always denied that they existed, and even said that they were a degraded institution. Grigson was rightly suspicious of these denials, for in fact a simple form of dormitory exists in most of the bigger Bison-horn Maria villages. Even to-day the headmen deny their existence—I have never 883

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
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883 quite understood why—but once they realize that the enquirer is not prepared to be deceived they talk fairly freely about them.

883 485 In all these villages there are commodious rest-houses for the use of visitors and officials on tour and when they are unoccupied —and they are but seldom used officially—the boys sleep in them as their dormitories. The boys, however, are not fully organized as among the Murias, but a leader may be appointed—in Mokhpal he was called the Sian, in Chote Timnar the Peda. Sometimes an older man sleeps with them and imposes a rough sort of discipline, fining those who are absent without cause. An old Maria, Sodi Mukha, is said to have been very proud of his management of the dormitory at Mokhpal. 'Originally', I was told in this village, 'the boys used to make their house in the middle of the place and it was theirs. But when Government ordered us to make a rest-house we had to build it not as we wanted it, but as the officers wanted it.'

883 841 The girls sometimes sleep together in the house of a lonely widow, but often have their own building. This is occasionally combined with the corporate menstruation hut. The menstruating women sleep on one side and the unmarried girls on the other. It is more common, however, for such women to sleep at home and to leave the unmarried girls to themselves. They too are not organized as in the Muria ghotul, but they are fined for quarrelling and for non-attendance. Both boys and girls have regular duties. They must all bring wood for the dormitory fire. At marriages and funerals they must collect wood and make leaf-plates. In the evening the boys and girls often meet in some central place or in front of the boys' house and dance and play games.

883 836 The relations between the boys and girls are not organized and disciplined as among the Murias. At marriages the members of the two dormitories may slip away together and sleep in some secluded place. At Penta the boys described how a girl would make a hole in the wall near which she slept. 'Then a boy creeps up and pokes a stick through the hole to wake her, and she creeps out to join him.' At Bara Harmamunda, the boys said that they actually went into the girls' house, though I fancy this is exceptional.

883 The Bison-horn Maria dormitory does not seem to play an important part in the social or religious life of the tribe. It is not established in the mythology; it does not serve as a school of dancing or as a place for initiation into sexual experience; there is no need in these pacific hills for village guard-rooms. Whether at any time the institution existed in a more flourishing form it is now impossible to say.

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to be a definite infiltration of Bison-horn Maria influences from Bastar. The illustration in this Supplement shows some of the Lahiri Maria girls and gives some indication of the quantity and Bison-horn style of the ornaments.

Before climbing to Kuvakodi I had sent some Marias up the valley to Nugur village in Kutru Mar, on the Indrawati banks, to invite to my camp the Kuruk boatmen who had taken Dr. Mitchell and myself in their canoes in November 1927, down the river from Nugur to the Jitam rapids.[1] Tati Ogha and Rajintappa, the leaders of our 1927 ' fleet ', and several of the boatmen arrived at Lahiri that evening, and recognized me, after thirteen years, with tears of joy. They were received and made at home with the utmost courtesy—that almost stately courtesy so characteristic of the Gond, whether of Marias at a feast or of Betul Gonds receiving the bride's party at the bridegroom's village; although the Bastar Hill Marias look down on Kuruks or ' Jharaman ' (netters), the Lahiri headmen could not do enough for these Kuruks, giving them the best of the food, refilling their leaf-cups with *mahua* spirit, and showing a real delight when I tied a *pagri* on each Kuruk's head, and presented them with cloth and beads, while they insisted on the strangers getting the best places from which to watch the dancing.

The motor journey from Lahiri to Surjagarh, about 59 miles in all, involved a return on our outward tracks through Bhamragarh to a point three miles east of Pirmeli, thence roughly north or north-west through Kandar, Burgi and Markel villages to Chukmitapalli, and thence due east through Hitawara to Surjagarh; despite a very early start we reached Surjagarh after dark, thanks to ' receptions ' in every intervening village and, above all, to delays for treating yaws patients. All these Maria villages have excellent human material, and some surprises for the visitor. At Burgi, for example, a boy dashed off to his house to emerge as a uniformed boy scout! Some years before an attempt to start a boy scout movement in Ahiri zamindari had met with some initial success, but had apparently died out. Yet this boy had carefully preserved his uniform in a leaf-box, and, more hopeful, he and some other boys had preserved the memory of the lessons they had had on cleanliness and hygiene and in a minor way were still influencing the villages to carry out what they had learnt. It is often assumed that the Marias and similar men of the backwoods have never seen anything of the outer world. Comparable with the visit of a party of Bastar Hill Marias to the Allahabad Exhibition mentioned on page 71, was the fact that this boy and some other Maria youths had been taken two or three years before to a scout jamboree at Delhi. When I asked

[1] See p. 164.

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
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[88] 177 him his chief impression of Delhi, he spoke of the Kutb Minar, which he told me was almost as fine and tall as the factory chimney of the Allapilli saw-mills! Either at Burgi or the next village another phenomenon was a Maria in a good tweed coat above khaki shorts and stockings with flashes, wearing over all an excellent fawn Curzon topi with a dark brown pugaree, far smarter than I have ever owned. I discovered that his clothes had all been given him by the zamindari of Ahiri, when he had become a member of the Sironcha Independent Local Board. That night, still in his fine feathers, he came to see the dancing in my camp at Surjagarh: but as the drumming swelled and the dances warmed up he found himself unable to keep up the detachment appropriate to his pseudo-*sahib* status, and gradually divested himself of topi, coat, shirt and shoes, finally peeling off his shorts to reveal beneath them the usual abbreviated loin-cloth of the Maria, seizing a drum, and joining in the dance: he was then indistinguishable from any other Maria but for his air of authority as a headman, and his 'undress' was typically Maria, as described in the *Gazetteer*[1]:—

291 304 'Their dress is scanty, consisting of a compromise between a *langoti* and a *dhoti*, a strip of cloth wound tightly round the waist in rope-like folds and passed between the legs with the spare end hanging down in front below the knees. Often this garment diminishes to the scantiest rag. They adorn their necks with handsome strings of beads and their arms occasionally with metal and glass bangles. Their ears are pulled out of shape by the weight of numerous brass rings with which they are usually garnished, and occasionally they wear *pagris*.'

632 This Independent Local Board for the Sironcha taluq consisted then of eighteen members, of whom only six were aboriginals, although there were 3,354 aboriginal to 2,850 non-aboriginal voters. The aboriginal members were almost all returned unopposed, and were *de facto* the nominees of the zamindar, who had had to use his full influence to persuade them to join this peculiar body! It was in the circumstances no surprise discovery that the open, mainly non-aboriginal, country around Sironcha and Ahiri got far more benefit from the Board's expenditure and services than the wild interior of Ahiri zamindari. But the Maria members were utterly illiterate and at sea in the Board meetings. It was the zamindar's influence alone that secured for the Maria areas such services as the Board gave them. Nevertheless, the mere fact that there is an independent local authority for Sironcha tahsil secures that at least this tahsil does get spent on it all that it pays in cesses and other local taxes, and a fair share of Government grants to local bodies, in marked contrast to the fate of the zamindaris of Garchiroli tahsil, who come under the tender mercies of the Chanda District Council

[1] *Chanda District Gazetteer* (Allahabad, 1909), p. 99.

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
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unchallenged. I emphasize the word sympathy: the method of threatening and punishing the headmen must be given up, and every effort made to win their understanding support for the new measures and even to entrust them with their execution.

The walks and talks at Surjagarh delayed the start on the 32 miles journey to Jawarwandi, and the car and lorry were more than once bogged on the way, so that once again we arrived in camp long after dark. It was on this journey that we crossed the tongues of Bastar territory mentioned on page 378 of this Note: in the southern tongue, in fact, we were bogged for an hour or more, but, as in Bastar, were readily helped to extricate ourselves. I noticed and stopped in *gotul* or bachelors' dormitories in several villages before and after Surjagarh. Many of these are treated by touring officers as though they were rest-huts built for their special convenience, like the *chauri* of Hyderabad or Berar villages. They use them also for posting up legal notices, and in two I found nailed to the wooden posts copies of the *Yudda Samachar* or War News in the Marathi edition published by the provincial War Purposes Fund for dissemination of accurate war information in all villages; this showed singular lack of intelligence on the part of those who controlled such propaganda in Chanda district, for in these Maria villages not a person was literate and very few could speak Marathi. The *gotul* culture here must be similar to that among the Murias just across the Bastar border in North Antagarh, but in the short time available I did not overcome the Marias' natural reluctance to discuss this intimate social organization, a reluctance heightened, I suspect, by the fact that here on the fringes of the *gotul* country the institution is the butt of Hindu ridicule or prurient curiosity. But there certainly are *gotul* in these villages, at least for the youths, and I found one, with some difficulty owing to the reticence of the local Marias in these mixed villages, at Erka in Rangi zamindari. So far as I could make out, they are still to be found in the Partially Excluded zamindaris of Drug.

Jarawandi is the headquarters of a sub-zamindar holding under Ahiri a taluq of twenty-three villages: the rival claims of Ahiri and Jarawandi to the seignorial dues have been a nuisance to the local Marias. Here there was a large gathering of headmen and *Sendhias* of *patti* groups of villages. Enquiries from them and later at Murumgaon showed that the *panchayat* system described in the extract on pages 286-8 of this book is not only as vigorous as ever, but is more widespread than previously recorded, there being *Sendhias* in almost every Chanda zamindari. It had been stated to me that the zamindars outside Ahiri had usurped the authority of the *Sendhia* and his *patti panchayat*, but I doubt the truth of this, and

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
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the later waves of Gonds and Raj-Gonds which set up the kingdom of the Gond Maharajas of Chanda. It would be very interesting also to see whether anything survives of the peculiarly Hill Maria and Muria cult of the clan-god as distinct from the more developed religious system of the Raj-Gonds, with its wonderful foundation of myth, the full richness and religious and cultural significance of which the world will begin to realize when Haimendorf's epoch-making book on the Raj-Gonds of Adilabad is published in the near future, and when it is followed up by similar detailed investigation of Gond life and custom in all parts of Gondwana. How far there is any common mythological basis of Raj-Gond and Maria culture would be a factor of great significance. I am conscious that the weakest side of this book has been its failure to probe into the mythology and folk-songs of the Bastar Marias. I do not believe Hill Maria culture to be nearly as rich in that respect as Muria culture is shown to be by Verrier Elwin's book, *The Muria and their Ghotul*. Yet there must be more to be said of the folk-tales and mythology of the Marias of Bastar than has appeared in the first edition of this book; indeed the second section of Elwin's Comment in this edition gives some indication of the wealth of Maria myth awaiting record in Bastar.

Another question clearly needing investigation is the extent to which the *gotul* as an institution is a real factor in Chanda Maria life. I have implied in this Note that it survives, but is gradually being relegated into obscurity as a result of the impact of Hindu ideas and of Hindu ridicule. That would, however, apply more in the northern zamindaris than in the country along the Bastar border from the River Indrawati north to Jharapapra. This part of Ahiri zamindari is landlocked and largely protected from the influx of Hindu ideas save in so far as these are brought in by zamindari and government subordinates. The fact moreover that the *Sendhia* and *patti panchayat* organization is still vigorous in Ahiri zamindari should be an indication that there has been no psychological inhibition on these Marias preserving their tribal life and cultural inheritance unimpaired. It would be interesting, however, to trace the outer boundaries of the *gotul* system and to see what has happened to it, when, and why, in these outer fringes.

This Note is stronger in its picture of economic conditions. Here the most significant fact has been the banning of *jalapod* or shifting cultivation during and after the Great War of 1914-18. One would like, given the time and opportunity, to get at the psychological reaction of the Maria to this as expressed in his folk-songs; one would like also to be able to go through the records of criminal

2: Elwin
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[For information on the ghotul and the activities of its members, see category 116, pp. 269-682.]

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

# PREFACE

THE subject of this book is the ghotul, the village dormitory, the bothie, the bachelors' hall—*Jünglingshaus* is an attractive German word used recently by Ruben—of the Muria of Bastar State. Similar institutions are widely distributed among communities of the Austro-Asiatic cultures, though none have been studied in sufficient detail for full comparison. But on the existing evidence it seems probable that the Bastar ghotul is one of the most highly developed and carefully organized in the world. For what is a village guardroom for the Naga, a boys' club among the Uraon, a refuge for temporary sexual association in Indonesia, is for the Muria the centre of social and religious life.

The study of an institution that is related functionally to every aspect of a tribe's life presents certain technical difficulties of presentation. The culture pattern must be developed in due order; but this means that there will be many references in the earlier chapters that can only be explained later on. A book of this kind, where everything fits in, which describes a culture that is integrated and intelligible, has to be read in bulk—as it were—rather than in sequence. For the reader's convenience, therefore, I give here a brief introductory account of the ghotul in the light of which Part I must be read.

The Muria ghotul is an institution, tracing its origin to Lingo Pen, a famous cult-hero of the Gond, of which all the unmarried boys and girls of the tribe must be members. This membership is carefully organized; after a period of testing, boys and girls are initiated and given a special title which carries with it a graded rank and social duties. Leaders are appointed to organize and discipline the society; throughout this book I call the boys' leader the Sirdar and the girls' leader the Belosa. Boy members are known as chelik and girl members as motiari. The relations between chelik and motiari are governed by the type of ghotul to which they belong. Two distinct types of organization are recognized. In the older, classical, type of ghotul, boys and girls pair off in a more or less permanent relationship which lasts till marriage. They are often 'married' and cohabit in the dormitory for several years. In the more modern form of ghotul, such exclusive associations are forbidden and partners must constantly be changed.

Chelik and motiari have important duties to perform on all social occasions. The boys act as acolytes at festivals, the girls as bridesmaids at weddings. Both dance before the clan-god and at the great fairs. They form a choir at the funerals of important people. Their games and dances enliven village life and redeem it from the crushing monotony that is its normal characteristic in other parts of India.

The intimate association of the ghotul with every aspect of Muria life means, of course, that we must study the whole of that life in less or greater detail. The ghotul must be put in its place. For this reason I have divided this book into two Parts. Part I gives the setting and background, Part II describes the life of the chelik and motiari in detail.

In Part I, I begin with a description of the geopolitical background of the tribe, and give a brief account of the three elements that compose it—the Jhoria, who are Hill Muria now settled in the plains, the Muria immigrants from the north, and the very old aboriginal population of eastern Kondagaon. In Chapter II, I describe the economic life of the Muria; the ghotul is only a night club; all day its members are engrossed in the quest for food and drink. The chelik are kept busy in both axe- and plough-cultivation, hunting, fishing,

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the Muria do not illuminate their houses for it, but tie ears of grain in long strings over their doors. Road work begins, and everybody is busy reaping.

November.. A busy month in the fields. Since September the ghotul have been almost deserted by the chelik, who spend their time in little huts watching the crops. Reaping, threshing, winnowing and storing grain occupies everyone. From the end of October the motiari have been going out dancing the Diwali and, where this practice is unknown, boys and girls go together for the Hulki dances.

December.. In some villages the Jata Pandum is held in this month. People cut their sarson crops and store them. They collect myrabolams till the end of January.

### IV. Cultivation and the Ghotul

883 241 At Padbera and a number of villages in the neighbourhood of Antagarh the ghotul has its own property. The villagers give the chelik a piece of land for cultivation which is known as *chelik-parha*. The boys bring the wood from the neighbouring forest, spread it on the field, burn it and sow the seed. The girls see to the weeding and when the crop is ready all join in the harvest. The girls husk the rice in the ghotul itself and when it is ready give a feast to the village. The following day they offer an egg, red and black powder and liquor to the Kanyang and Rau of the field for the protection of the ghotul.

The chelik and motiari sometimes go to work as a ghotul. Should a party of visitors arrive from another village for a dance and there is no food or liquor for their entertainment, the boys approach one of the wealthier villagers (who of course may have several of his own children in the ghotul) and ask him to advance them rice and pulse, some liquor and a pig, promising they will go to work for him when he needs help in weeding his fields, gathering his harvest or mending a broken embankment. At other times villagers who are in urgent need of help employ the ghotul children and pay them with gifts of grain and pulse. I am told that money is rarely given. Sometimes the boys and girls only receive their food, though this food at least in the evening must be good and should include pork and liquor. When the children receive gifts of grain they save it up, storing it in the house of the leader, till there is enough for a big feast. This is prepared and eaten near the ghotul, or helps to augment the feast at the end of a dancing expedition. The parents are also invited; since the mothers may not go inside the ghotul, the feast is enjoyed outside.

### V. The Muria's Food

*Kare ahār ta pele pahār. If you get enough to eat you can push a mountain aside.*—Muria proverb

883 In addition to work in the fields, chelik and motiari are kept busy all day long, in and around their homes. The motiari must fetch water from the well or stream, collect leaves from the jungle for leaf-cups and plates, nurse the babies, clean and cow-dung the buildings, husk rice and grain, help in the cooking, feed goats, pigs and cattle. The boys must fetch firewood from the forest, make string from hemp and bark, prepare the ploughs and carts, keep the buildings in repair, and look after the cattle and other animals.

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Muria

## THE MURIA'S LIVELIHOOD

Their interest in these household occupations may be seen in scores of homely riddles, which describe them in vivid symbol.

Drumming, drumming, what is that drum?
At cock-crow she is drumming.

A motiari is expected to be back from the ghotul by dawn and should be busy husking grain before her parents are awake.

A broom is 'the thing that licks quickly and then falls flat'; a leaf-plate is 'the little tank full of thorns' or 'the boy that morning and evening gives a share to all'; a pot of curds hawked round the village is described as 'the white cock going from house to house'.

But the main interest of chelik and motiari—for after all they are still only boys and girls—is in food. *'Bhaio bikān kandiya ma dhyān.* As soon as morning comes, his mind is in the cooking-pot.' Of things to eat the Muria have a considerable variety, much more than would be available to people of similar economic status in a town. All the rich and varied produce of the great Bastar jungles is open to them; the State has not yet interfered with their right to natural roots, fruit and leaves—they may take what they want so long as they do no damage.

As Grigson says of the Maria: 'The difficulty is not so much to say what they collect and eat as what they do not; in fact, if one were to take one of the lists of trees, shrubs and herbs compiled by the Central Provinces Forest Department and copy from it the names of all edible forest products, one would not even then produce an exhaustive list.'[1] I do not propose to give such a list here; but I will briefly mention the things that chelik and motiari like best. Meat and fish probably stand first in popularity—I will describe them later.

FIG. 5. Uspal rice husker. Length 5'9"

Among fruit trees, the mahua is supreme. When the flowers begin to fall, the cattle are kept tied up until the women and children have gathered them. They spread them in bright yellow patches swiftly turning brown on rocks before their houses, in specially-made enclosures. When dry enough, the flowers are beaten with heavy sticks, sometimes with the wooden doors of a pigsty. The pulp is made into chutney with dried khamer fruit and tamarind kernels, and eaten with rice or gruel. The oil is used for cooking and lighting. The flowers are stored in baskets, and make one of the most eagerly demanded gifts when the chelik make a dance tour of a village.

Another popular fruit is, of course, the mango. The motiari fetch baskets of wild mangoes from the forest where the trees grow in profusion, cut them up in the ghotul and give them with chilli and salt to the chelik.

Aonra fruit is liked, and there are many riddles about it. 'A green pigeon came from Porrobhum and laid its eggs on a leaf.' 'The white bird hides its eggs under its wings.' Other popular fruits are those of the thorny bhoir—'Mother bites, but daughter invites'; the kurlu—'The little sparrow's liver is sweet'; the aimra, the char, the jamun and the tamarind. Tendu fruit is picked while still unripe and put in kodon chaff to mature. Sometimes it is buried in the ground and a fire is lit above it. When ripe, it is eaten raw. Wild figs are eaten ripe or dried and ground up with flour.

[1] Grigson, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 .AW32 Gond AW32
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times be of very great length. In Kuntpadar there were two measuring over 226
21 feet long. 227

The *dhir* is an elaborate and beautifully constructed trap, from four to eight feet long and one and a half feet high. The bamboo slats are very fine and set close together. Entrance to the trap is by a series of small doors with spiral staircases going inwards and upwards with bamboo points facing in to prevent egress. When the fish have entered—and the *dhir* is only used for the smallest creatures—they are shaken out of a small hole at the top left-hand corner. In a riddle this trap is described, '*Netânek korinta murwus tagat ke peshinta*: [524]
It goes in behind and comes out through the roof', or 'It eats with four mouths and relieves through the fifth'.

A special arrow with a detachable head is sometimes used (Fig. 12). The arrow-head after sticking in the fish is pulled out of its socket but remains attached to the shaft by a cord. The shaft remains as a float, and is easily recovered.

Ceremonial beats for fish are held before the eating of the new mangoes. 226
The chelik gather poisonous leaves and roots from the forest and throw them 278
into the water. The fish are stupefied and float to the surface and are then easily collected. They are distributed among the villagers, who eat them with the new mangoes.

Many different roots and leaves are used as fish-poison. At Phunder they gave us the names of the fruit of the mode tree, the khuni plant and kurra bark. These three are powdered, mixed together and thrown into the water. Women are not supposed to go into the water when this is done.

Before fishing the Muria invoke the Yer Kanyang (Water Maiden), asking 226
for success and promising a token present. When the first fish is caught 776
they say, 'Whatever ill may be, from widow, witch, from squint or evil eye, 782
be on you'. They spit on it and throw it back into the water. If there is a very successful catch, they may sacrifice a goat or pig on the bank of the river in honour of the Water Maiden.

## XI. Liquor

To the Muria liquor-drinking is both a duty and a pleasure. Mahua spirit 273
is a duty because it must be offered to the gods at every festival, at the naming of a child, at a marriage, at a funeral. But the juice of the sago-palm, and even landa rice-beer (where that is taken), is only for pleasure. I will consider duty first.

The mahua tree is a source of food and oil as well as of liquor, and for this 273
reason is greatly honoured. The tree, says Dalton, 'is held sacred by the 824
Gonds, and truly no product of nature has greater claims on their gratitude'.[1] The Muria place a branch of the tree in the centre of the marriage booth; they lay the dead to rest beneath its shade; it is taboo to cut it in a clearing for shifting cultivation; as a source of alcoholic refreshment it was discovered by Lingo himself. Like the Gond and Baiga, the Muria are bound to offer it on every ceremonial occasion; the clan-god demands it, the Village Mother can never have enough, there is no better means of keeping the Departed content and quiet.[2]

In the ghotul, a donation of mahua spirit must be brought by a young boy 273
aspiring to childhood; its consumption is a necessary feature of an election 883

[1] E. T. Dalton, *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal* (Calcutta, 1872), p. 281.
[2] The Kaya put a mahua leaf in the head of a new-born child.—Thurston, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 52.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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273 of ghotul leaders; it is distributed when a boy or girl leaves the ghotul after marriage; it is a convenient and compendious means of paying a fine. The [883] chelik offer it to their drums before a wedding, and drink it in honour of Lingo at the end of the Pus Kolang dance.

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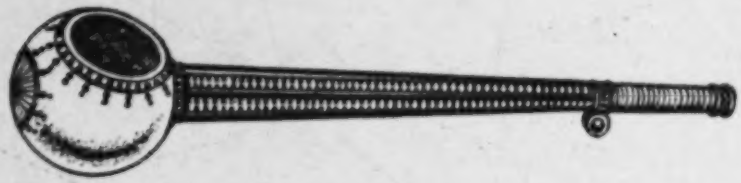

FIG. 13. Brass *orhi* used for ladling liquor
*Length 8"-9"*

273 This homely drink, so intimately connected with every aspect of their lives,
656 so accessible to the forest-dwellers, so readily and cheaply prepared, may not be distilled by the Muria in Bastar or by the aboriginals anywhere. Its profits must be divided between the State and the middleman. Home-distillation is everywhere forbidden, and the privilege of the manufacture and sale of the spirit is farmed out to contractors in open auction. The business has thus passed into the hands of the most degenerate type of Hindu and Mussalman adventurer, for few aboriginals have either the means or the enterprise to compete with the sophisticated aggression of the outside world in the open market. These adventurers rob both the aboriginals and the State. They dilute the spirit; they put soda in it to cover the fact of their tampering; they make false returns; they use filthy water in unclean pots;[1] their shops are centres of the most degraded type of alien immigrant into tribal territory.

When the National Congress came into power in 1938, they declared that they would not apply their Prohibition laws to Europeans or aboriginals. It would have been more consistent had they allowed the aboriginal to distil his own liquor and had thus ceased to draw revenue from his drinking habits. The real evil of the present system is not that the aboriginal gets drunk, but that in order to get his liquor he is forced into contact with the worst type of alien and outsider.

In this respect conditions in Bastar are better than in many other parts of India. The Excise Department is efficient and understanding; the State controls the mahua trade, but allows the aboriginal great freedom in the use of toddy and salphi. But nothing can atone for the evil of depriving a primitive people of a natural right.

439 However, once that has been done, the arrangements in Bastar are as good
[435] as can be imagined. The spirit is cheap, only two annas a bottle,[2] and passes are freely granted to the Muria and Maria to purchase whatever is needed for
[674] ceremonial and social occasions. As a result there appears to be very little illicit distillation in either Kondagaon or Narayanpur. The figures of prosecutions for the five years, 1937–41, are these:

[1] The riddle 'Man and wife piss in the same lane', to which the answer is 'The two pipes of the still', probably hints at the dirt of the Kalar's out-still.
[2] This was in 1941.



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2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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custom that the man who goes to the trouble of tapping the tree, protecting it with thorns, and making a bamboo ladder, has a right over it, especially when it is growing far away in the forest. The trees are not taxed but the villagers are not allowed to sell the juice. Disputes simply arise over the right to take the liquor for personal use.

The salphi juice, however, is not generally so intoxicating as to cause quarrels in the same degree as landa rice-beer or mahua spirit. Bedford's *Technical Excise Manual* (par. 263) gives some account of the comparative alcoholic strengths of these drinks. 'The alcoholic strength of toddy varies according to the nature of the palm tapped, the season of the year, the time for which it has been drawn and other circumstances. The average results of a number of tests made with toddy from all parts of the Madras Presidency were:

| | | Percentage by Volume |
|---|---|---|
| Coconut .. | .. 85·7° U.P. | 8·1 |
| Palmyra .. | .. 90·8° U.P. | 5·2 |
| Date .. | .. 91·4° U.P. | 4·9 |
| Sago .. | .. 89·6° U.P. | 5·9 |

Toddy exposed for sale in Bengal in 1909 was found generally to range in alcoholic strength from about 93° to 94° U.P. When reasonably fresh it has a food value somewhat comparable with that of well-made malt beer.' The average strength of landa rice-beer may be taken at about 85° U.P. (8·6% by volume). Mahua spirit is much stronger—*rasi* may be sold at strengths of 50° to 70° U.P. and *phuli* of 5° to 35° U.P. The average for *rasi* is 60° U.P. (22·8% by volume) and for *phuli* 25° U.P. (42·8%).

## XIII

With all these varied economic and social activities how far do chelik and motiari meet one another during the day? Does tribal custom allow them to share the same tasks or are the functions of men and women sharply differentiated?

The girls, of course, have the major part of the house-work to see to. They cook, bring water, clean the buildings with cow-dung and whitewash, husk the grain, grind wheat or spices. They generally make the *mussni* mats, tie grass into brooms, prepare leaf-plates and cups. In the house a woman must not climb on the roof and she must not take grain out of the dhusir grain-bin, although it may only be removed at her command. A motiari before the menarche may go into the room where the Pot of the Departed is kept, but not afterwards—for she is going to join another clan and has no part with these ancestors; her spirit will mingle with those of her husband's family.

The chelik, on the other hand, have comparatively little to do in the house. They may cook and bring water when the womenfolk are in their periods; they have the business of erecting the framework of the building which the girls will later plaster with mud, and they thatch the roof.

But their main work is outside. In male hands is all the business of the fields and forest. They make and use the ploughs; they cut wood for fuel or cultivation; they embank the fields; they tend the cattle, make and drive their carts; they go to hunt and fish; they watch the crops and thrash and winnow them.

Yet there remain many chances for sharing of labour between chelik and motiari. A boy does not always see his motiari in the dark. Both can repair

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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the embankment of a field, both can join in spreading brushwood over a clearing.

A motiari can put her hand to a plough and help her chelik in the long labour of the furrow. She can go with her chelik to the forest for wood and she can help him carry it, but she must not use an axe, though she may break bits of wood with her hands or feet. She may not kill anything, yet she can join the beat for small game and she may fix a trap in the river and bale water out so that the boys can catch the fish. But she must not use a bow and arrow, or a knife, or thrust the plunge-traps into the water.

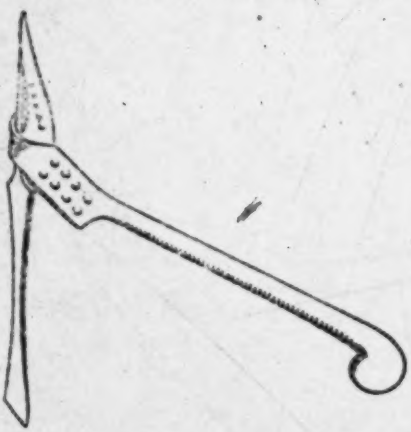

FIG. 14. *Baras* or *tatli* used for cutting up meat and planing wood
*Length of upright 9"*

A motiari, once she is mature, must not sleep on a machan to watch the fields. She must never go with a boy to sleep there—if she does a tiger will shake it and perhaps kill them both. In some villages, she may cow-dung the thrashing-floor, provided it is of her own clan, but she cannot thrash with her feet, or winnow the grain from a fan though she may do it with her hands. She must not sow seeds of rice or millet, though she does sometimes sow beans and vegetables.

The motiari gather mahua flowers with the boys; they collect myrabolams, and extract oil. Very important, they take food to the boys while they are working in the fields. This is a constant motive of romance in folk-tales.

The motiari may attend a funeral and most of the festivals. At the New Eating ceremonies they prepare the plates and cups for the feast, and are eager spectators of the ceremonies. They dance at most festivals with the boys. But I know of no Muria women Siraha-mediums or Gunia-diviners, though these are not unknown in Chhattisgarh. I am told, however, that there is a female Siraha of Pendrawandin in Gudabera, and there is a tradition that in former times it was the women who sacrificed to the gods. 'In those days, they used to cut the tail instead of the head and the bird or animal instead of dying would escape. Men soon got annoyed at this and said, "You women do not know how to do it; from now we will sacrifice". Men then began to cut off the heads of the birds and animals and the sacrifices were complete. This is why women do not eat the head of any bird or animal offered to the gods. They said to their husbands, "Now the head is yours, ours is the tail".'

There are not many absolute taboos. A man must not husk grain or grind it. He must not wash women's clothes or wear them—except at night. Girls must not wear boys' turbans and clothes except on ceremonial occasions.

On the whole, Muria economy provides many opportunities for boys and girls to work together in the open air. This is one reason why their relations remain so fresh and healthy.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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with a pleased recognition that the marriage at which they had so earnestly assisted had been consummated.[1]

### VI. The Ghotul's Share in the Ceremony

*Nāg nāgin he bihao ma dondiya he salmal. The little fish are kept busy at the cobras' wedding.*—Muria saying

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No wonder that there is no greater threat to a Muria boy or girl than that the ghotul members will not attend their marriage. For from beginning to end the smooth progress of the rite depends on the chelik and motiari. For a week beforehand the motiari instruct the bride in the ghotul. Chelik and motiari accompany the bridegroom when he goes to fetch his bride; they sing and dance at every point of the ceremony; the chelik go to bring in the wood for the booth and the girls direct them to its site by dancing on the spot with a mahua tree. Boys and girls go together to fetch the earth for the manda-platform, and dance round it when it is ready. The motiari attend through all the long-drawn business of anointing, they carry the bridal pair about on their backs; they bathe them, do their hair, feed them and weep with them. At the central moment of the rite, it is the drumming of the chelik and singing of the motiari that provides dignity, colour and excitement. Chelik and motiari again assist at the concluding ceremonies in the bridegroom's house, and it is the chelik who ultimately arrange the consummation of the marriage.

But these ritual duties are only the beginning of their task. They have to see to the entertainment of a large number of guests. The Sirdar arranges for wood and organizes the dances; the Belosa sees to the supply of water and leaves. She and her motiari have to make leaf-cups and plates for the male visitors (they only give leaves to women visitors, considering that they should be able to make their own). This in itself is a very considerable task, but in addition nearly all the cooking is done in the ghotul camp, and chelik and motiari have to serve food at meals. I have never seen girls work so hard as at Nayanar, where there were three weddings one after another: as the chelik were leading one husband and his bride to bed, the motiari were preparing the next bride for her fate. The girls never seemed to stop working; they were engaged day and night; yet though they began to look very tired

[1] Similar customs are observed by other tribes. In Siriti, I watched Bison-horn Maria girls escort the bride to bed, though here the groom had to drag her into his house. Then a jovial party stole a cock and scattered its feathers along the path. The Juang boys escort the bridegroom from the *dorbar* (dormitory), sometimes tying him hand and foot, to where his bride is waiting. They make him sit with her and say, 'See, here is your house: look to it. Here is a new girl, big-breasted and young. Do not disappoint her.' The boys piss inside the house, throw rubbish over the floor, then tie the door and run away. Bride and groom must clean the house before the marriage is consummated. I have witnessed a similar ceremony in a Bondo village.

For the Kota of the Nilgiri Hills consummation was in the nature of a test, like the custom of 'bundling' in Wales. In the morning, the girl was questioned whether she liked her husband: if she did, the marriage was confirmed, if not, it was annulled.—E. Thurston, *Ethnographic Notes in Southern India* (Madras, 1907), p. 62. Here, as with the Hill Maria and other very primitive tribes, the payment of bride-price and consummation was the marriage: there was little more to it.

By Hindus of Western Bengal, the third night after the wedding is called Phulsajya, or the flower bed. 'Revealdropping goes on freely.'—S. N. Roy, 'Straw-Achar in West Bengal', *Man in India*, Vol. VIII, p. 190. In Mysore, the Brahmins observe the beautiful garbhadana ceremony, when the husband in a room filled with flowers pours fruit into his wife's lap and the priest prays 'May a male embryo enter thy womb as an arrow the quiver'.—M. N. Srinivas, op. cit., pp. 134f.

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towards the end, I did not once see them strained or quarrelsome. Their tremendous vitality kept the thing on the move and made everyone cheerful and happy.

In return for all this work, the chelik and motiari seem to get very little, one meal a day and a little liquor. The bride and bridegroom distribute small keepsakes, rings and beads. The motiari of the bride's ghotul demand and receive four annas as *mundi*-cowrie. The chelik also demand a new mandri drum from the bridegroom in compensation for the loss of one of their girls. They are generally given eight annas instead. This present is called *sakta*. The boy also has to give *chitkul*-cymbals, or four annas, to his own chelik.

People treat the chelik and motiari with great respect, for there is great fear of offending them—a strike, which is not unknown, can upset the entire proceedings. It is

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DETAIL

Fig. 23. *Chapali-mundi* necklace, from Kanipadar, of red, white and blue beads
*Length 5' 5"*

[831] noteworthy also that there is no exchange of obscenities between the older people and the ghotul members. When the old women smear their dirty hands on all available male faces, catching hold of their private parts or pouring haldi over their buttocks, they never do it to the chelik. It would be considered equally shocking for a married man to poke his stick at a motiari

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or to abuse her as he may do freely to the married women. There is no doubt about it: these girls and boys are set apart. They must not be touched by sophisticated adult hands.

### VII. The Significance of the Marriage Ceremony

Where both boy and girl belong to the same village and come from the same ghotul, the procedure is simplified and shortened, but otherwise follows the same lines as in the foregoing accounts. It will be seen that, in spite of various differences, the essentials of the rite are everywhere the same. The fundamental things seem to me to be these—the preparation and instruction of the bride in the ghotul, the ceremonial fetching of the bride by the bridegroom and his party, the building of a marriage-booth with its associated magical materials and patterns, the exchange of gifts and payment of a bride-price, the liberal use of oil and haldi to consecrate the bride and bridegroom, the procession round a marriage pole or booth seven times (the last two items are obvious borrowings from Hinduism), the tying together of the bridal pair, the pouring water over them (probably a development of a Maria custom), minor rituals designed to emphasize the unity of the couple and to ensure the potency of the bridegroom, the last visit to the ghotul and the official bedding of the couple by the chelik.

Let us consider the meaning of these essentials in more detail. In a brilliant analysis of the marriage ritual of the Bihari Kayasth, W. G. Archer takes a comparison from modern art. 'If we are to find an analogy for this wedding ritual, the nearest would be a surrealist poem, ballet or novel. In a surrealist work the action has a strange power and a mysterious charm. Strange persons develop their intriguing contacts and the action has an air of irrational urgency. On analysis it is seen that many of the actions are symbolic and the poem, novel or the ballet generates its power from the semi-conscious associations which its dialogue, gestures, scenery and action evoke. In the ritual of a Kayasth wedding, there is a similar use of irrational action, a similar use of persons with a strangely inflated power, and a similar use of semi-conscious symbols. The meaning of the ritual may be submerged and, for many, may be scarcely comprehended but its basis is in a symbolic system and its total effect is overpowering.'[1]

This will apply also to a Muria wedding, though the meaning here is sometimes more obvious; the Kayasth is a highly developed community and naturally resorts more to symbolic concealment of its real interests and desires. The different elements in a Muria marriage can be easily distinguished. There are first the many rites that emphasize the break with the old life and the entry to the new. There are the symbolic actions and materials to express the sexual aspect of the marriage and to ensure its fertility. There are the symbolic or overt arrangements to protect bride and bridegroom at this critical moment of their fortunes. The social and business aspect of the union of the two families is always prominent.

The length, complexity and extravagance of the marriage ritual is necessary to impress on boys and girls who are so used to love and sex the importance of the step they are now taking. Marriage here does not, as in so many other cultures, mark an initiation into the mysteries of sex. It is not, usually, the binding together of two people who have fallen in love with each

[1] From *The Wedding of the Writers*, the manuscript of which I have been privileged to see before publication.

## THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL

887 goes to the market and attends the festivals, though there is not so much for her in these as for the men. But her real hour of happiness is at a marriage. Here she may lay aside restraint and recapture the abandon of youth. Now she may drink heavily and for a few hours in blissful intoxication free herself of inhibitions and forget all that is tiresome and weary in her life. If the older men enliven the marriage scene with their buffoonery, the older women divert it with their obscenity. There is nothing that they may not say, little they may not do. Their songs and their dance movements are outrageous and never fail to rouse laughter in the crowd.

888 In a very few cases Muria women grow riggish in old age. They adorn themselves with many ornaments and wear bright-coloured saris. This behaviour is not approved.

You are an old woman,
Forget your dances.
You are an old woman,
Yet on your buttocks is a tiny cloth
And flowers are in your hair.

Although there is a rule that women should never use their ghotul titles after marriage, when a group of old women who have grown up together in the same ghotul meet in later life, they usually use the old names in order to awaken happy memories of the past. I am told that then they exchange reminiscences through half the night and that such times are among the happiest of their lives.

886 As elsewhere in aboriginal India, the climacteric does not appear to be dreaded or even to be specially noticed. In India, women are old at 45 and they greet the cessation of the menstrual period with relief that they are now saved from its embarrassments. I have not been able to find any myth about the climacteric; there does not seem to be any rule about it or any desire to avert it. It is a purely natural phenomenon. 'The stream that flowed so long is dry', 'the old tree has begun to wither'. Some people believe that the tree withers because 'no one goes to an old woman,[1] so her vagina has no grain to eat; no rain falls in her stream, so how can it flow?'

### II. Death and the Ghotul

761 The ghotul is a place of separations. But when a chelik or motiari dies
883 there is a special feeling of sorrow, a sense of outrage, the conviction that something exceptional and abnormal has occurred. Sometimes the ghotul is closed for three days; where it is not closed the children gather sadly and there is no singing and there should be no intimacies. When older people die the dormitory is not closed. 'The ghotul is the *Dinda-mahâl*, the Palace of the Unmarried. As the Raja's Palace is not shut when people die in the town, neither is ours. But if two or three of the chelik and motiari die, then we shut it.' At Dongrigura, they said that when a chelik died, the motiari wept and next day initiated one of the younger boys and gave him the dead chelik's title, so that there might be no gap in their fellowship. When the Subedar died, they made his little brother Subedar next day and gave him as 'husband' to the Subedarin, his age, or elder brother's 'widow'.

The death of a chelik or motiari is always abnormal. The death of a little child or of a child in the womb is no less unnatural. 'Just as in a field, rice

[1] A rather cynical proverb runs: 'How disgusted is a man who eats stale food in the morning and goes to bed with an old woman at night.'

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sometimes grows properly and sometimes fails, so a child may die or rust or wither for lack of rain and so die in the womb.'

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The Muria do not hide the facts of death from their children or restrain them from witnessing the gloomy rites by which they dispose of their dead. Indeed, as at marriages, chelik and motiari have their special duties at a funeral. The chelik generally carry the corpse out to the place of disposal; the motiari accompany them there and afterwards make leaf-plates and cups for the funeral feast. If a pregnant woman or a mother with a very young baby dies, only the chelik may take the body out beyond a stream and dispose of it.

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All over India it is believed that those who die unmarried turn into unsatisfied and petulant demons. They have been frustrated in obtaining the loveliest things in life and for all time they are miserable. It is curious that it is not usually virginity but the fact that the dead boy or girl has not passed through the marriage ceremony that matters. A married boy who has not consummated the marriage is said to live in some saja tree on his property to protect it. Women may go near, but not menstruous or pregnant women or their husbands. The Muria take special precautions when a chelik or motiari dies. The Gaita drives nails into the four corners of the grave and the ghotul members make a special offering to the ghost begging it not to trouble them. In some villages it is believed that the ghost of a motiari lives under a mahua tree and the cooking for the funeral feast therefore is done in its shade. In Padbera, the Muria believe that when a motiari dies she becomes a Mirchuk and lives in a pipal tree, and a chelik becomes a Matia and lives in a banyan. The usual Gondi word for the ghost of a motiari is Nelang-jural; occasionally she occupies an old ant-hill. Very young children live in a banyan and drink its milky sap. In Bakulwahi twelve years ago a motiari died and the Gaita drove nails into the four corners of the ghotul building and went round it with the chelik in procession in order to protect it against ghostly invasion. They sacrificed a pig saying, 'Are you going to stay here, or will you go away?' When the pig ate the rice which was as usual offered to it the Muria understood that the motiari was ready to go away. They carried the pig to the boundary of the village and killed it there and thus freed the ghotul from any danger from the ghost of that girl. In Palari the Muria said that when a chelik was killed by a tiger he turned into a Baghmeri-bhut. When he died of ordinary illness he became a Knara-bhut, revealing his presence in a whirlwind. When a very young chelik died he became an Arajatta-bhut and entered into people's stomachs, giving them a lot of pain. In Palnar the ghost of the chelik or motiari attacks whichever member of the ghotul is the first to get married after the death, presumably out of jealousy. When the Siraha diagnoses what is the matter he offers the usual sacrifices and, making a little man out of straw, asks the bhut to leave its victim and possess the straw-man instead. This is then carried to the boundary of the village and thrown away. Where a chelik or motiari has died in a village during the previous year, on the eve of any wedding the Gaita goes to a small date palm and ties it round and round with string saying, 'Go away from here, don't come near the boundary of our village'. He puts a large stone on the tree and the wedding can take place in safety. After the wedding he removes the stone, unties the string and offers an egg and chicken.

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In Kabonga it was said that when a chelik or motiari died, the ghost became what they called an Uriya-bhut. But they said that there was nothing very dangerous about it. 'The Uriya-bhut plays and dances just like the chelik and motiari. In fun it throws leaves and dust into the air; it blows in people's

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*CHAPTER SEVEN*

# MURIA RELIGION

## I. Introductory

ALTHOUGH this book does not profess to be a study of Muria culture as a whole, it is necessary to give an outline of the religion of the tribe because the ghotul is itself a religious institution and has its share in the worship of the gods, while many of the chelik are already being trained as mediums and priests.

The ghotul is a *thirtha-sthān*, a holy place, as a Hinduised Muria explained to me; you cannot commit sin within its walls. It was founded by Lingo Pen, noblest of Gond cult-heroes, and no evil dream or power of witch or warlock can invade its sanctuary. Chelik and motiari undertake dancing expeditions in honour of the gods; they visit the great clan festivals and dance at them; at the New Eating ceremonies chelik are employed as cooks and motiari gather leaves for plates and cups. In the ceremonial hunts before certain festivals, the chelik play a major part, and they have special duties in connexion with the first ritual cutting of forest clearings. In some villages it is the chelik who roll the Gaita in mud at the Wijja Pandum and carry him home on their shoulders.

The ghotul also is itself the scene of occasional religious activities. In Palli-Barkot and neighbouring villages the blessed seed collected at harvest-time is hung up in the ghotul until it is needed for the first sowing. On the eve of many festivals the Kaser-Gaita sleeps in the ghotul to ensure chastity for himself and the chelik. Dassera and Diwali are observed by the ghotul members in their own way, and they keep other special festivals which I will describe in detail later when I return to a fuller discussion of the ghotul's part in the religious life of the tribe.

Muria religion is undoubtedly a religion of the Hindu family with special affinities to its Shaivite interpretation, yet at the same time it is but little 'Hinduized'. It remains a special and characteristic faith, a logical entity which can be described and recognized. It acknowledges a large number of deities whom it pictures in a simple and homely manner. It has a definite priesthood and a body of mediums who communicate with the gods while in a state of trance. It erects shrines and temples to the gods and builds small huts for the tendance and placation of the dead. It consecrates every rural activity by sacrifice and a sacramental meal. It purifies and protects the village by a series of ceremonies, and it directs its beneficial power against the energies of witch and warlock.

The subject is a large one, and I cannot hope to treat it fully here. But I will give a brief account of the Muria gods, the Muria priesthood and the shrines in which worship is performed. I will describe the customary methods of worship and sacrifice and consider the trance in which the gods make their wishes known. Certain phallic elements in the worship must also be described. I will then give a brief outline of the festivals and ceremonies by which the whole of Muria life is brought under the sway of religion, and conclude by giving detailed descriptions of festivals I have myself observed. We shall then be in a position to see more fully how the ghotul fits in to this great complex of belief and practice.

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New Eating ceremonies and made ceremonially every ten years, and a large gourd kept for pouring water. Piled round one of the pillars is a heap of dancing-sticks of dhaman wood called Bhumiriya Kolang; these are kept in the shrine for the Pen Kolang dances and at the end of three years are taken to the village boundary and hung up on a rope across the road. There is a Ankus hunting-horn, not a brass one, but the real horn of a wild buffalo.

This description is not irrelevant to a book on the ghotul. The spoons and gourd are used by the chelik, who have the responsibility for cooking at the festivals. The dancing-sticks are made by the chelik and used for their ceremonial dances. The hunting-horn is sounded by chelik to summon the people for festivals. Every visiting deity means a corresponding visit from the chelik and motiari of its village: Markabera is thus in close touch with several villages—Timnar, Metawand, Kokori, Kasabahi, Tadopal, Garhbangal and Suhnar. The Markabera god visits Metawand and Kokori, and possibly other villages. The visits of the gods with their attendant chelik and motiari, many of them of clans different to the Markabera Wadder clan, play a very important part in bringing boys and girls of these villages into touch with one another.

In Markabera there was only one temple. In Bayanar there are eight grouped together round a wooded hill covered with fantastic rocks amid which the little shrines are built. A narrow path leads steeply up the hill to the first shrine standing up sharply on a rocky mound of its own. This shrine is the home of Pandi Dokara Gutal (represented by a pole with a bunch of peacock feathers at the end) and his two sons Mundi Kuar Gutal and Lalit Kuar Gutal. The three poles are slung high up beneath the roof, for the shed is an open one. At the foot of the centre pillar of the hut is a stone seat, with gongs and an iron lamp. This is a Naitami shrine and there are two stone hearths at either end of it, one for the clan-priest of the Naitami and the other for the husbands of women in their menstrual periods and women who have very recently given birth to a child. On one pillar is a carving of the vagina, on another the sun and moon and a crude horse.

By the little path along the hillside are two sets of pillars with flat stones in front of them to support Pandi Dokara at festivals. A little further on is a small temple for Hinglajin Dokari. This goddess is represented by a closed litter, and there is the usual stone and hearth for her worship.

A little way down the hill is a temple of the Sori clan which houses two more Gutal (poles)—Dawdi Dokara and Lalsai Dokara. Going still further down the hill we reach a large rock on which is a fourth shrine which is empty save for a stone representing Mundi Kuar; this is in charge of a Hindu (Kalar) Pujari from Mungwal.

These little temples on the hillside were curiously impressive; old gods of hill and forest seemed very present there. Down the hill in a shed was a bamboo [illegible] and a flag in an earthen pot representing Son Kuar, the son of the Angas Dewat Narayanpur—another Naitami shrine. One of the most interesting things I saw on this visit was in the temple to Son Kuar. Here was a very small [illegible]en pot tied up in dub grass, in which the *jiwa* of a dead priest was dwelling. For a long time even the Pargana Manjhi hesitated to tell me his name, especially in that potentially dangerous spot, but at last I got it—it was Tota Muria.

We went on towards a great grove of mango trees till we came to a closed temple, again of the Naitami, in which was a characteristic Angra Deo, Bailha the mad god, a stone to represent Bangaram consort of Dantesbwari, and two other stones for Kotgudin Matal and Dulardei Matal. Here we were in a definitely Hindu atmosphere. There was a large clay elephant for Bangaram,

[Description of temple buildings see pp 196-197, cat 116—Andpk]

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But I doubt if the necessity of ancestral worship devolving on the youngest son accounts for the Lingo legend. In Bastar, it is a sister's son or a son-in-law who generally performs the funerary rites. Lingo was—in most versions of the tale—miraculously born and the parents play no part in the sequence of events. The Lingo legends fit into the common folk-tale formula: probably all the elements suggested by Macculloch had their part in its construction: but I believe it is the custom of the Levirate (to which Macculloch does not refer) that gives it its real point. 773

The legend, especially in its Bastar form, cannot be understood apart from the foundation of the ghotul and the horror of adultery so characteristic of Muria society. Here is a very practical reason for the village dormitory—it insulates the elder brothers' wives from the dangerous, legitimate, seductive younger brothers. The youth of the tribe, so distracting to business with its fun and music, is concentrated away from home. The figure of Lingo stands out as the ideal younger brother, who denies himself even his legitimate claims and is absorbed in the ghotul and the motiari. It is not impossible that the legend was composed by a jealous elder brother, once cuckolded and turned reformer, who desired to abolish the disruptive influence of the *sage-doseur* relationship.

There remains the character of Lingo which reminds Bishop Eyre Chatterton 'so strangely' of Jesus Christ. The impropriety of comparing the two figures becomes evident when we remember that Sir Richard Temple had to omit nearly half the poem describing Lingo because it was 'frivolous, improper and objectionable'. I greatly doubt whether either Hislop's or Trench's version represents the original legend as it was told normally to village people. The Pardhan priest in Nagpur was obviously a Hindu convert and would not be likely to repeat passages that would too greatly offend a missionary. I suspect too the hand of the Reverend Baba Pandurang. I doubt also whether Mr Trench's petition-writer would have been likely to have risked any improper elements in the story of Rai Linga. This may sound rather hypercritical, but I have never been able to understand how it was that a cult-hero with a phallic name—Lingo means the phallus—should have become the embodiment of purity. Nor could I understand why the supposed embodiment of the Gond virtues should have been a celibate. The Gond despise celibacy; they believe that a man who dies unmarried turns into an especially unpleasant ghost after his death; the sadhus and other celibates in their folk-tales are without exception presented as the greatest rascals. [589]

The Bastar version of the legend suggests a solution of this problem. Lingo is a phallic deity, as the origin of his name given in the legend on page 241 clearly shows. He does not ascend into heaven, but marries seven wives and has children who people the Bastar shrines with gods. He is the founder of the ghotul, where he has his motiari. This is the true Gond picture of the character of Lingo. Hislop's and Trench's versions are undoubtedly nobler to Western and Brahmin eyes, but they are unreal in a Gond setting.

### VI. The Lingo Legend in Bastar

Not all the Muria know the legend of Lingo, though all worship him and regard him as the founder of the ghotul. His cult is more or less coterminous with the Pus Kolang, which is danced in his honour. Different versions of the legend have, however, been recorded in the Antagarh, Bemur, Amabera, and Ghat Jhorian Parganas of the Narayanpur Tahsil, and at Alor and Kanharpara in the Kondagaon Tahsil. In north and east Kondagaon, though 773 [883]

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773 they were busy at the work, evening came on, and they bathed in the river. As they began to walk home, night fell, and they had to pass by the grave of Usarengi Palli. When they reached the place, they put down their *guppa*-baskets and sat down. Shri Belosa said, 'All your queens have come!' At that word, suddenly Usarengi Palli came out of the earth and took the girls into the grave with him. That night every one of the seven score motiari became pregnant.

The next day, Shri Belosa said, 'Come, let us go to sell our fish in the bazaar and buy ourselves things with the money'. Usarengi let them out of the grave, and when they reached the bazaar they found that their fish were large and fine and they soon sold them. Some bought necklaces, some bought rings, and as they busied themselves with their purchases, night fell. They could not find their way back to the grave, so they went into the village. There Usarengi Palli's mother was weeping, remembering her son. Shri Belosa said to the other girls, 'Look, our mother-in-law is weeping. Come, let us go to her and comfort her'. The girls went to the old woman and greeted her. The old woman said, 'Where have you been all this time? Your parents are looking for you everywhere'. Shri Belosa said, 'We just went to the bazaar'.

Now Usarengi Palli, finding himself lonely in his grave, said in his mind, 'The seven score boys surely went to that bazaar, and are dancing and making merry with the girls'. He took a great stick and got out of the grave and went to the bazaar. But it was too late; there was no one there. So he went thence to his mother's house, and found the seven score girls sleeping, and his mother and Shri Belosa watching by them. When he saw his mother he embraced her. She begged him to stay with her. But he was angry and said, 'What have you ever done for me? No one cares for me. I will not stay'. As he said this, there came into the mind of his mother and the seven score girls that they had forgotten to take the trotters of the pig eaten at the funeral feast to Usarengi Palli's grave. They got up and went hastily to the grave but there was no sign. The old mother returned home weeping loudly, and Usarengi Palli took the seven score girls with him into the grave and they were not seen again.

## IX. Lingo and the Ghotul

● 883 773 To the Muria perhaps the most significant thing about Lingo was his foundation of the ghotul system; this was the greatest treasure he has given mankind; neither the discovery of fire,[1] the gift of mahua liquor,[2] nor the invention of music can compare with this. The ghotul is an integral part of the Lingo legend; even in the Betul version there is a hint of it in the oft-repeated statement that Lingo could not attend to his brothers' wives because he was always playing with the village maidens.

The significance of the ghotul for the legend is this, that it explains why Lingo was 'chaste', why he achieved so supererogatory a virtue as to turn a 'joking-relation' into one of avoidance, why he did not let himself be seduced by his brothers' wives. Like any good chelik his attention was absorbed by the ghotul, not only—be it noted—by its erotic delights, but by the eighteen instruments played there, by the songs and dances, the discipline, the fellowship.

Every version of the Bastar legend stresses Lingo's association with the ghotul. The Alor version ends: 'From the days of Lingo the ghotul is built

[1] See p. 260. [2] See p. 263.

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in every village, and the boys and girls live there together without sin. So long as a girl wears combs in her hair she may play and laugh with the chelik, but when we see a girl without a comb, we say nothing to her, for she must be a man's wife. And as Lingo was twice in the fire and no evil touched him, so it is with the boys and girls in their ghotul.'

The Karikhodra story concludes: 'When Lingo died, they made ghotul everywhere in his memory and to make him happy. For as the children dance and play he rejoices.'

And the Benur tale ends: 'Lingo lived in the ghotul, and the magic of his music drew the boys and girls to him. Because of Lingo no evil can come to the ghotul; no witch can enter there, or fever or disease; and for three years from the blossoming of her flower no girl can conceive.'

The first ghotul, where Lingo lived after his elder brothers married (the boys, it will be remembered, had no parents but it was equally necessary that the youngest should not witness his elder brothers' relations with their wives) and which was called *dinda-mahāl*, or palace of the unmarried, was a beautiful place.

> Lingo's ghotul was beautiful as the horns of bison, beautiful as a horse's throat. Its central pillar was a python, the poles of the roof were *mahāmandal* snakes, the beam was a *dāman* snake, the cross poles were cobras. The bamboo framework of the roof was made of kraits tied together with vipers and covered with the tails of peacocks. The verandah roof was made of bulbul feathers. The walls were of bod-fish bones, the door was made of the crimson *silphi* flowers, the door-frames of the bones of ogres, the fastening were *ular-malom* snakes. The floor was plastered with the flour of urad pulse. The *kidul*-seats were crocodiles. There was an Anga there of saja wood swung from the roof by *pirpitti* snakes.
>
> Lingo himself wore a turban like a white gourd flower; his dhoti was coloured silk; his shirt shone in the sun; his clogs were made of sandal wood, his stockings of mongoose fur, his belt was a *gidarra* snake; as he walked he sparkled. He carried a crooked stick in his hand; he walked as if he were husking rice.[1] That is why we dance so slowly and carry an axe over the shoulder.
>
> Every day Lingo used to go hunting, and every night to the ghotul. His gun was an ebony branch, his bullets were wild berries, he sat in the nest of the *rala* bird above a salt-lick. When he had shot enough, he would return to the ghotul. Belosa and Manjharo would welcome him, and take his mat. Malko and Jalko spread it on the ground, Dulosa was his blanket. Because of the love-charms in his eighteen instruments all the unmarried boys and girls would come running to the ghotul. Lingo's ghotul name was Manjhi; it was given him by Belosa and Manjharo. He himself gave the girls their names. Belosa and Manjharo sat by Lingo and combed his hair, they scratched his arms with their combs and massaged him with oil. Belosa gave him ganja—there was no tobacco then.' Lingo's comb was made of dhaman wood. After massaging Lingo, the girls got up and saluted him with Johar,[2]

[1] In Old Calabar, when a man passed the sacred objects of Egbo he walked as if he were lame.—Hutton Webster, *Primitive Secret Societies* (New York, 1908), p. 116. Compare the limping dance of the priests of Baal.

[2] The Johar was the supreme achievement of Rajput chivalry. A besieged garrison, considering its fate hopeless, prepared for the Johar as for a wedding: the women threw themselves into a furnace, and the men rolled out to die in battle with the enemy.—

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then danced to the music of his eighteen instruments until they were weary, when they lay down and slept.

The traditional names of the first motiari differ from place to place. In Jhakri, they gave the following list:

Godakare Mode, whose navel was long as the axle of a cart, the leader, who collected the girls and gave them their orders.
Belosa, her assistant.
Kurumtuse Buke, whose duty was to distribute things—tobacco, parched rice, liquor.
Hinahibe Bire, who made the bamboo pins for leaf-cups and plates.
Akintare Jare, who spread the leaves which served as mattresses at bedtime.

Among the names of the first chelik are:

Mankor Singa, the leader.
Jiha Guta Soma, whose duty was to bring wood.
Karata Guta Soma, who had to make the fire.

At first things did not go altogether smoothly. The boys stole wood from the village houses, they relieved themselves on the paths, they neglected their work for their dancing. There was even an attempt to stop the ghotul. 'At first', so runs a Masora account, 'there were twelve score motiari and twelve score chelik who came to listen to the music of the eighteen instruments. Lingo caught them by the hands and they danced and danced and danced. Soon the children's parents grew angry and said, "Here is a man ruining our children" and they forbade them to go to the ghotul. At that Lingo was angry and he changed his form and went from house to house bringing death and disease. The people went to the Siraha, who discovered the cause and told the villagers to let their children go again to the ghotul.'

After this Lingo began to teach the chelik and motiari ideals of discipline and service. One night he came leaning on his stick, and when the girls and boys heard it tapping on the ground they kept very quiet. He sat down and taught them never to relieve themselves on the village paths, not to have anything to do with married women, not to steal wood from the villagers. Then in order that they should not spend too much time on dancing, he allotted them certain seasons when they should dance all day. During the rest of the year they should dance only at night. At Jhakri, Raunu gave other details:

> The first fire was lit by Lingo in the ghotul. It was the Pus Kolang fire. Lingo taught the boys how to go from village to village dancing in his honour. The boys tried; Lingo became Gain and showed them their mistakes. The next morning, they looked at the ashes of the fire, and there were the marks of a bullock's hoofs. Three days this happened and Lingo declared it a good omen. He called his tiger and they went out to dance, leaving the girls behind. 'This is in honour of Lingo', they said, 'and whoever goes to a girl will die.'
>
> Lingo took the boys outside the village and made them stand facing it. He put seven little heaps of rice, seven aonra rings and seven bits

J. Tod, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan* (London, 1920), Vol. I, p. 355. The expression is now used as a greeting by many tribes. Tod describes it as a salutation sent by a Rajput chief to an inferior landholder (Ibid., Vol. I, p. 163). For the Muria it is a greeting between equals.

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Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria



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Hill Maria boys in front of the Ituimar ghotul

Bison-horn Maria girls in the court of the Dugeli ghotul

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of slag on the ground before them, and prayed to Tallur Muttai, 'Look after these children. Keep them safe from other gods'. Lingo gave fire to Mankor Singa, and bade him tend it so that it did not go out till they returned. Then they went to dance in seven villages.

After seven days Godakare Mode and the three score motiari brought a bamboo and decorated its shoots with gold. 'If they have been faithful to us and if all is going well, it will stand up of its own accord and no one will be able to pull it up.' So thinking they welcomed the boys home. The boys hung their sticks on the tree and sat down to smoke. The bamboo stood of its own accord and none could uproot it.

Then came Lingo and was pleased with the stick. He tried to pull it up, but it would not move. Then he cut it down, at the bottom, near the ground. From the stump grew a semur tree; ever since, the semur tree has had thorns like the small branches of a bamboo.

Then the motiari said, 'We too must go to dance with you'. So Lingo took them for the Chait Dandar and the Hulki dances. At Diwali, the girls said to the boys, 'You go off by yourselves in Pus; we will go to dance by ourselves at Diwali'.

The tradition of Lingo's association with the ghotul is still very much alive. Every year thousands of boys take great pains to perfect a complicated and rather tedious dance and set out on a pilgrimage in his honour, which must be marked by accurate performance and complete chastity. In some ghotul, as at Masora, a dhol drum hangs near the door in honour of Lingo. Lingo in his turn protects the ghotul which he has founded; no evil dream can approach, no sin can be committed, and no girl will become pregnant for three years after puberty.

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The chelik remember Lingo, with their ancestors and the Earth, whenever they drink liquor; they offer him a few drops of mahua spirit whenever they play their drums at a marriage; even in eastern Kondagaon, they invite him to weddings saying, 'This is your marriage, your haldi-oil, not ours but yours'; they still sing many songs in his honour. Most of these are inexpressibly boring, consisting as they do of a long and largely inaccurate recital of Lingo's relations. This poetic and romantic figure has not inspired much poetry in his worshippers. The following song is typical.

### *Lingo Pata*

*Re re loyo re re la rela*
*Re re loyo re re la re re la rela*

| | |
|---|---|
| *Bāra bhai lingo ra layor,* | O twelve Lingo brothers, |
| *Pinding hamkāng niya ra layor.* | There's haldi and flour for you. |
| *Dāy ra lingo dāyu ra lingo!* | Come, Lingo, come! |
| *Pinding hamkāng yokti ra lingo.* | With haldi and flour we anoint you. |
| *Wāyura pāta wai ra lingo.* | May songs unknown come to us. |
| *Wāyura dāha wai ra lingo.* | May steps unknown come to us. |
| *Pahili pāta niya ra lingo,* | The first song is yours, |
| *Maria pāta mawa ra lingo.* | The Maria song is ours. |
| *Pahili dāha niya ra lingo.* | The first steps are yours, |
| *Maria pāta layor ra lingo.* | The Maria song is the chelik's. |
| *Wāy ra lingo wāyu ra lingo!* | Come, Lingo, come! |
| *Nana wāyla parron ra layor.* | I can't come, chelik. |
| *Nāna bato manta ra layor.* | I've got work to do, chelik. |
| *Kuddi holāng bulong ra layor.* | I've got to fix the handle of my hoe. |

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At Masora, the chelik sing in Halbi to Lingo before a wedding.

*Lingo, balun, Lingo!*
*Kây kâie ây chalikman?*
*Bila dhare bita urwta parli bita dhave jao.*
*Macho buta âse.*
*Tucho kây buta âse?*
*Macho korki dheta bharto âse.*
*Tucho bigur nitoy gil gobind tucho.*
*Pahilo tucho nigcho mand.*
*Aru nigcho karki.*
*Tucho ây nibnato gil banu ây.*

Lingo, say, Lingo!
Why have you come, chelik?
We've come to invite you to the wedding.
I have work to do.
What work have you to do?
I must make a handle for my hoe.
Without you nothing can be done.

To you liquor must first be given.
The haldi must first be put on you.
Only with you the song goes well.

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In Penjori, near Semurgaon, the Gaita explained how Tallur Muttai (who is no other than Mother Earth) and Kadrengal her consort (who is lord of the forest and the *dahi* clearing) are connected with the ghotul.

> In a saja tree were born a girl Tallur Muttai and a boy Kadrengal. They gave a dream to Lingo and told him 'We have been born in a saja tree: give us a place to live'. So Lingo made them a small hut and they lived there. To please them he used to play eighteen instruments at once. In these were love-charms which drew all the boys and girls of the village to listen.

In many ghotul, Tallur Muttai and Kadrengal are honoured as well as Lingo and with him protect the children from harm.

### X. Lingo and Creation

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The creation stories of the Muria are on the same pattern as similar stories throughout the central portion of peninsular India.[1] The main difference is that Lingo, at least in the older stories, takes the place either of Bhimsen or the other cult-heroes which various tribes exalt as the chief actors in their mythology; and that Kadrengal, a rather mysterious figure, vaguely regarded as a forest-god, and his wife Tallur Muttai (Mother Earth) play the parts that in other areas are allotted to Mahadeo and Parvati. The following story was recorded in Kokori in east Kondagaon.

> In the old days there was an earth. At the time when Lingo and his brothers were born Mahapurub turned the world topsy-turvy and it was eaten by the earth-worm, so the Middle World became nought but water. There were two young children on the earth. God put life into their bodies by poking them in the back: the marks of his fingers still remain. They hid inside a gourd which grew up out of the water as a great creeper and reached the heavens.
>
> Presently the worm excreted the earth and some of it fell on a siari leaf. That earth began to weep, 'Who is there to serve me, for all mankind are drowned?' When Lingo heard that weeping he went to see what was the matter. Meanwhile Mahapurub had plucked the gourd growing from the great creeper in the heavens and found inside the two small children. 'Where can these children live?' So thinking he sent his crow to search for it. The crow flew and flew across the ocean until at last it saw Lingo and his brothers driving their harrow over the sea. Wherever the harrow went there was land, where it went crooked or missed a place there was water and a river, where the earth was piled up at the side there was a mountain. When the crow saw this it flew back and told Mahapurub that the earth was made again, and the two children were sent to live there.
>
> Mahapurub told the boy and girl that they should marry each other but they refused saying, 'We are brother and sister'. So the smallpox goddess came and separated them and each got smallpox.[2] Afterwards when they met they did not know who they were, for their faces were

[1] Compare Roy, *The Mundas*, App. I, pp. 2-7; Roy, *The Birhor*, pp. 400-24; A. Campbell, 'The Traditions of the Santals', *JBORS*, Vol. II (1916), pp. 158.; Roy, *The Hill Bhuiyas*, p. 262; D. D. Agarwal, 'Ethnographical Notes on the Cheros', *Man in India*, Vol. IX (1929), p. 205; W. Koppers, 'Bhagwan, the Supreme Deity of the Bhils', *Anthropos*, Tome XXXV-VI (1940-1), *passim*. *The Baiga*, p. 308; *The Agaria*, pp. 8ff.

[2] I have recorded this idea among the Juang, Kond, Gadaba and Bondo of Orissa: it is probably very common.

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
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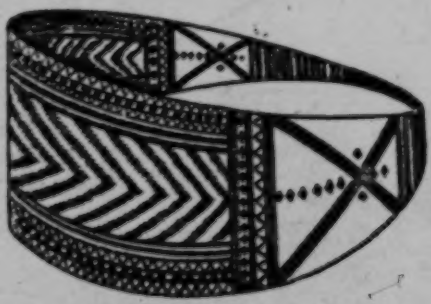
Bison Horn Maria



State Medical Department has done much to check the spread of the disease. Malaria, as everywhere in the Indian forests, is endemic, but few suffer from enlarged spleen. Leprosy and the venereal diseases are very rare. Skin diseases are also much less common than among the more elaborately clothed and thus dirtier people of the north.

Men wear a small loin-cloth and sometimes a little turban. The women tie a sort of skirt, very short, round their waists: it hangs down to the knees. The breasts are covered only with ornaments; when visiting a bazaar girls may tie a small piece of cloth round their shoulders. They often wear a thin brass fillet round the hair, and the older women use a large snood which is most becoming. Round the neck are masses of bead-necklaces, and iron or brass torcs. The bright colours of the beads and the shining brass fillets against the rich brown skin make a sight of unforgettable beauty.



Brass fillet worn by Maria women

The Bison-horn Maria village is laid out on the same lines as the Gond village of the Central Provinces, unlike the communal settlements of the Hill Maria, Baiga or Juang. Each house stands in its own garden which is sometimes a substantial field, and a village may cover a very large area in consequence. Often a village is composed of anything from six to twelve small hamlets, each of which represents the grouping of a family round its patriarchal head. The little huts stand among woods, on rocky hill-sides, in the shade of spreading trees. Sometimes they appear almost submerged by waves of yellow sarson flowers or red jhira vegetable. Each village has a substantial building for the accommodation of travellers and this is used by the unmarried boys as a dormitory. The unmarried girls also sleep together, some-

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
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times in a little house of their own, sometimes in a room lent to them by an old widow. Where there is a separate hut, this is sometimes also used for the segregation of menstruating women. In a few places there are special buildings for this purpose. The houses of the headmen are not built in any special position, but those of the Siraha medicine-men can generally be distinguished by the little huts for patients which are built round them. On the outskirts of the village will be found the shrine of the Village Mother, and in a grove nearby there may be the temple of one of the clan-gods. Beyond is the village burial place and cremation ground. Rows of menhirs in memory of the Dead may be seen in the majority of villages.

There is no standard pattern for the Maria house any more than there is for the Maria village. Most of the houses consist of three rooms, each a separate building with eaves at different levels, which make them look, as Grigson says, 'like card houses'. The first room, which is really a built-in verandah, is the kitchen. It leads into a bedroom and this in turn opens into an inner and secret room mostly occupied by a platform for storing grain and other possessions; in one corner is the Pot of the Departed about which centres the Maria cult of the Ancestors. Frequently two or more such houses are built round a courtyard, part of which is occupied by a more or less open building where people sit to talk and work.

Maria women's dancing-stick (3½' long)

The houses are generally clean and pleasant, but littered with a great variety of domestic and agricultural impediments. Outside are the pig-styes and cattle-sheds,